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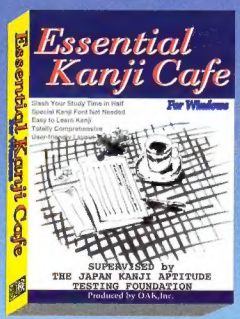

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Mangajin is a made-up word combining *manga* ("comics/cartoons") and *jin* ("person/people"). It sounds almost like the English word "magazine" as rendered in Japanese—*magajin*. All of the Japanese manga in *Mangajin* were created in Japan, by Japanese cartoonists, for Japanese readers.

Jikan de Gozaru
(The Time Monkey)

One of Japan's most lovable creations is now available in the United States exclusively through the pages of *Mangajin*. The *Jikan de Gozaru* is an alarm clock shaped like—and with the personality of—a playful monkey. To make this monkey tell you the time, simply shake or knock it. In a childish monkey-like voice, it might announce in Japanese:

> *Gozen hachi-ji jugofun de gozaru.*
> "It's eight-fifteen AM."

Then again, it might not. This monkey has an attitude—it's programmed to make whimsical non-time related remarks about 20 percent of the time. These include lines like:

Nemui de gozaru.	*Jishin de gozaru.*
"I'm sleepy."	"It's an earthquake."
Itai de gozaru.	*Tokei de gozaru.*
"That hurts."	"I'm a clock."

If you really need to know the time, just shake it again. It is programmed not to make whimsical remarks two times in a row. The monkey comes with a time-announce function, as well as an alarm and snooze button. With the snooze button you get various messages such as:

> *Jikan de gozaru. Jikan de gozaru. Gozen shichiji gojūgofun de gozaru. Okureru de gozaru. Okureru de gozaru. Gozen shichiji gojūgofun de gozaru.*
> "It's time. It's time. It's seven-fifty-five AM. You'll be late. You'll be late. It's seven-fifty-five AM.

A great gift for children or anyone who wants an alarm clock that will definitely wake them up with flair! (Requires two AA batteries, not included. This is a novelty item; because of the lilting, monkey-like voice, it is not really suitable for language study.)
#M0021 • $55.00

See page 95 for ordering information

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MANGAJIN

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Mangajin (ISSN 1051-8177) is published 10 times a year, monthly except January and July, by: Mangajin, Inc., 212 14th St., NW, Atlanta, GA 30318. The yearly subscription rate is $39.95; the yearly overseas subscriptions rate is $80 ($50 to Canada). Periodicals postage paid at Atlanta, GA 30304 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Mangajin, P.O. Box 77188, Atlanta, GA 30357. USPS #006137. The name *Mangajin* is registered in the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office.

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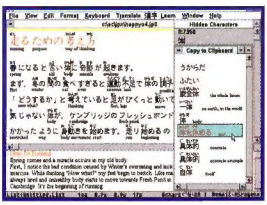

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LETTERS

Letters to the Editor

Mangajin *welcomes comments by letter, fax, or e-mail, although we reserve the right to edit for clarity or length. Please address correspondence to: Editor, P.O. Box 77188, Atlanta, GA 30357 (Editor@Mangajin.com).*
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Shin-chan's silly speech

I've heard quite a lot about Crayon Shin-chan before. Honestly, however, this is the first time I've actually read it and I found the main character very charming and "bad." Is he very popular with American readers, too? Besides his slightly "devastating" personality I've noticed his idiosyncrasy; he speaks of himself as "*ora*" twice on pages 26 and 27.

Although the English annotation points out that "*ora* is a variation of *ore*, a rough, masculine word for I/me" (which is quite true), *ora* sounds like a *kappe* (*inakamon*) (hick, clodhopper, or country bumpkin) referring to himself! So it's really amazing that Shin-chan, obviously a kindergartner, uses this word over and over. Why does the author of this manga make Shin-chan repeat this "rustic" word? Just for the fun of it?

MORI RYOJI
Redding, CA

You've hit the nail on the head: Crayon Shin-chan *artist Usui Yoshito often creates humor by using unexpected language in his manga. If Shin-chan referred to himself as* boku, *it just wouldn't be as funny.*

More easy manga

Mangajin should use manga for all levels of reading. What I mean is there should be a manga for a person who can only read hiragana and katakana, and there should also be a manga for a person who knows a few kanji and for advanced readers. This is good because I and probably many others have trouble reading the manga because our kanji skills are not that good. Yeah, I know you have the translations on the other side of the page, but I would feel better if I could read from the all-Japanese side; it would make me feel more skilled at Japanese.

TIMOTHY TURNER
National City, CA

Since our selections are authentic manga written for a Japanese audience (who read kanji quite well), it's uncommon to find one that's all-kana. Your best bet would probably be a children's comic, since they are more likely to use kana and simple kanji.

International interns

Through International Internship Programs, my husband and I hosted a Japanese intern teacher for the 1996-1997 school year. We provided her a room and a private bath in our home as well as all of her meals in exchange for cultural experiences she shared with our family and students at the intermediate school where I am an administrator. We also transported her to adult-education classes in English

(continued on page 26)

Correction

We failed to provide a copyright notice for the manga selection *Kacho Baka Ichi-dai* in issue No. 69. This manga was first published in Japan in 1996 by Kodansha, and English translation rights are arranged through Kodansha. We apologize for the omission.

Websites of the moment

The Japanese Language Information Files webpage contains a section of language games, quizzes (including ones for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test), and crossword puzzles. A Japanese operating system is not necessary—but patience is.

http://www.mickey.ai.kyutech.ac.jp/cgi-bin/japanese

J-pop Music CDs

The CDs below are from some of the top artists on the charts in Japan. Most are on the Avex Trax label, one of Japan's hottest, and are from Japan's superproducer Tetsuya Komuro, also know as TK. These CDs sell for as much as $38 in the US, and can be very hard to find even at that price. Each CD comes with extensive notes and lyrics. Many are hybrid disks including computer files about Avex Trax that can be viewed on either a PC or Mac (files are in Japanese.) Some even come with stickers!

Concentration 20

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Namie Amuro, Japan's top artist of 1996, has become a cultural phenomenon. This, her latest album, features heavy dance music showcasing her powerful vocals. 12 tracks: 56 min. #M0068 • $34.95

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Everlasting

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Produced by Mitsuru Igarashi, a rising star on the J-pop scene, this album serves up dance music with some great guitar work. 12 tracks: 47 min. #M0070 • $34.95

Human Power Plant

Buddah Brand

Buddha Brand delivers rap with a flair in a mix of Japanese and English, with plenty of 4-letter words, samples, and bass drops. The English is uncensored, but a few Japanese phrases have been cut. 7 tracks: 36 min. #M0071 • $17.95

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My wife, who is Japanese, was looking for a job here in the United States and she had to write up an English resume. She was primarily looking for a position as an executive assistant, so she wanted to include her typing skills. After she had written it up she asked me to proofread it for her. For "typing speed" she had written 60 MPH (miles per hour), and while I admitted to her that 60 MPH might be more impressive I thought that what she meant was 60 WPM (words per minute)!

CHARLES "CHAZ" BALDWIN
New York

Underwear alarm

My husband had been studying Japanese for about three years when, during a visit with my family in Japan, he discovered the delicate flavor of *shiitake* mushrooms. He wanted to bring some back home to the US, so he went to purchase a package at a nearby supermarket. As he was leaving, my husband told my mother that he was going to buy *shitagi* ("underwear") at the supermarket. My mother became alarmed and asked me to stop him, saying that particular store didn't carry any underwear. We had a good laugh when I explained to her what my husband really wanted to buy.

MIKO BRAIS
Lexington, MA

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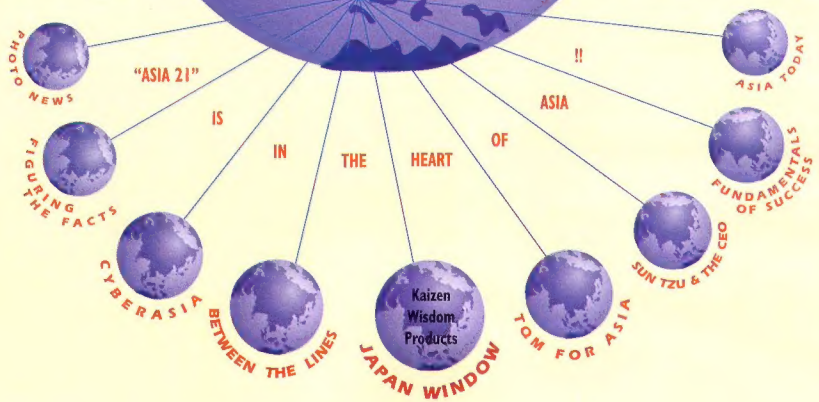

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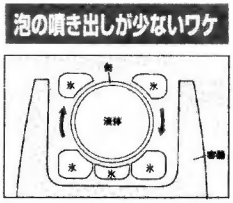
What do you do if unexpected guests call and you don't have any chilled beverages on hand? Or how about those times when you go to the fridge after a good soak in a hot bath, looking forward to a cool one, only to discover that there *are* no cool ones? If you have a *Shunkan Cooler*, situations like these are no cause for concern.

The *Shunkan Cooler*, from Empex Kishōkei KK (a maker of meteorological equipment), rotates almost any kind of canned beverage in a bed of ice, accomplishing in 90 seconds what would take 2–3 hours in an ordinary refrigerator. It's battery powered so you can even take it camping with you.

What qualifies this product for inclusion in Brand News, however, is the fact that the name is a visual pun. The word *shunkan* (瞬間) means "instant/moment," or, as a modifier, "instantaneous." In the name *Shunkan Cooler*, the kanji for "can" (缶) has been substituted—maybe something like changing "instantaneous" to "instan-can-eous."

Why it doesn't spew foam all over the place

If you spin a can of beer or soda around for 90 seconds, then pop it open, isn't it going to explode with foam? Empex points out that in accordance with the laws of fluid dynamics, even though the can is spinning, the liquid inside moves much more slowly. This, and the fact that the lower the temperature, the less a carbonated beverage foams, make the *Shunkan Cooler* as safe as it is convenient.



Key to diagram on the left

Awa no fukidashi ga sukunai wake
("Why it doesn't spew foam")

缶 (*kan*) = "can"　　液体 (*ekitai*) = "liquid"
氷 (*kōri*) = "ice"　　容器 (*yōki*) = "container"

Send us your examples of creative product names or slogans (with some kind of documentation). If we publish your example, we'll send you a *Mangajin* T-shirt to wear on your next shopping trip. In case of duplicate entries, earliest postmark gets the shirt. BRAND NEWS, P.O. Box 77188, Atlanta, GA 30357-1188

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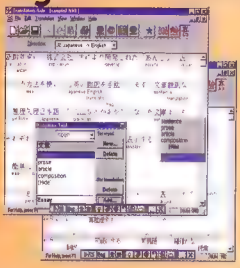

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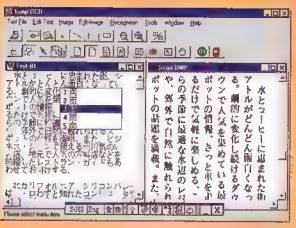

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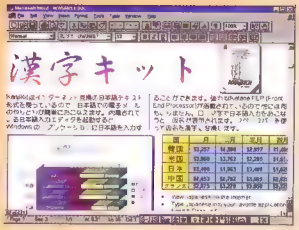

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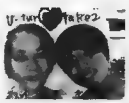
Joining the (Print) Club

by Kevin Voigt

On a summer night in Kumamoto City, teenagers line up in a video arcade. The line spills outside and into the bustling Ginza of this central Kyushu city. Follow the throng and the line disappears inside a curtained booth where friends strike a pose and push a button. Moments later a colorful reel of photograph stickers slide out of the machine.

It's a scene repeated thousands of times a day, from the sun-soaked beaches of Okinawa to the dairylands of Hokkaido. *Purikura*, or Print Clubs, are as requisite for Japanese teenagers as loose socks and Tamagotchi. An innovative revamping of the old instant-photo booth, the photosticker phenomenon

Part of the *Purikura* appeal is the wide variety of backgrounds available for the photos. Movie stars, idol singers, and cartoon characters can be magically transported into a group shot (the trio on this page seem to have a special fondness for cartoon-cat Doraemon). Patrons can have themselves "costumed" (top center) with the press of a button. At bottom right, two girls pose behind a label reading *Yōchūi jinbutsu*—"Dangerous Characters." Honoring one of the cardinal rules of cuteness, Print Club photos are small: the sticker at right—labeled on the bottom with the names "Ayumi" and "Mayumi"—is shown at actual size.



raked in a reported $850 million its first year in Japan, and its appeal shows no signs of waning.

The stickers are quick trade among students, who carry albums filled with hundreds of photographs to school.

Kawaguchi Naomi and her friend Kozaki Reiko, both 16-year-old high school students in rural Kyushu, said they couldn't count the number of times they've stepped in a Print Club photo booth. "We did it seven times just this past Saturday," Kawaguchi said.

Kozaki opens up her pocketbook—which is specially tailored to hold *purikura* photos—and flashes her collection. A quick count shows Kozaki carrying 240 photo stickers, each with different backgrounds and messages. "I have many more at home," she said.

There among the plastic-covered pages are photos of friends smiling together with the superimposed images of Japanese superstar singers Puffy and Amuro Namie. Manga characters such as Atom Boy and Doraemon appear to mug with uniform-clad students, along with movie stars like Keanu Reeves.

KEVIN VOIGT

Purikura *fanatic Funato Mayumi has a collection numbering 2,000 photos—and growing. Here she displays one of her many* purikura *notebooks.*

Seventeen-year-old Funato Mayumi said her collection of images numbers around 2,000—and is growing. "It's fun

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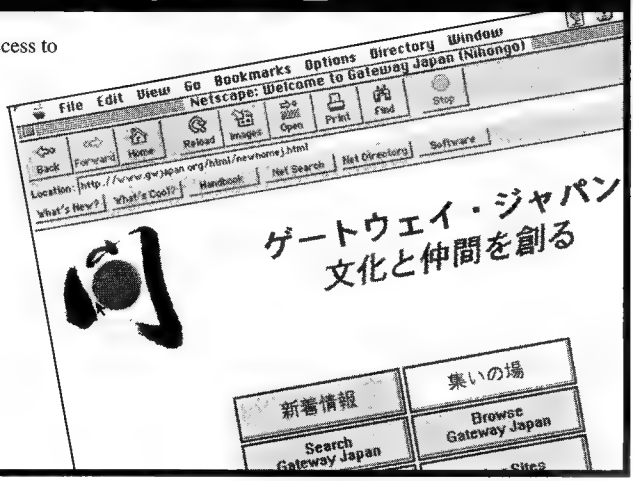
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to look at, and with so many friends doing it together it's cheap," Mayumi said. *Purikura* machines can sometimes resemble a college telephone-booth prank, as giggling students crowd seven deep behind the curtain.

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Inside the booth, students choose from a wide variety of backdrops. Images range from the cute (with figures like Cupid, Tweety Bird, and Mickey Mouse) to the profane. Some of the photostickers students displayed included a pair of boys surrounded by steaming, technicolor piles of *unko* ("poop"), or two girls sweetly smiling above bold letters spelling "F--k You," complete with a colorful border of manga hands extending the middle finger in each corner of the photo.

At ¥300 (around $2.50) for a sheet of 16 photostickers, the choice is yours. A wide selection of borders and the ability to personalize messages make the combinations virtually endless, and therein lies part of the broad appeal of *purikura*.

"There are so many frames, it's fun to get as many different ones as we can," Kozaki said.

There, too, is another underlying appeal to *purikura*—trendiness. Teenagers thrive on it, and the pressure of adolescent insecurities pushes the fad: the more Print Club photostickers they can collect, the more currency their popularity carries.

The makers of the photosticker booths have even gone so far as to claim *purikura* is reducing *ijime*, the nationwide problem of student bullying, as teenagers try to widen their circle of friends for photostickers.

"Collecting and trading has become part of the culture around Print Clubs," said James Takenaka of Atlus Co., the Tokyo-based company which developed the machine. "It was something basically started by the kids, with the object to have as many photos as possible."

Launched in 1995 as a way to attract more girls to Japanese arcades, *purikura*

has become a phenomenal success. Adding new, more action-oriented background scenes helped win over boys, too. The fad has spawned a lucrative line of accessory products—key chains, photosticker covers and photo albums. The machines are sold to arcades for around $10,000, but Atlus claims the cost is recouped in the first month, as each machine in Japan averages 100 "plays" a day.

The Print Club creative team was led by a woman named Sasaki Miho who started at Atlus after graduating from high school. Sasaki's leading role in the machine's development has caused a stir in the male-dominated business world of Japan, and Sasaki has since become something of a celebrity. "Even in America, a product developed by a woman that causes a billion-dollar industry is pretty unusual," Takenaka points out.

Observing the success of the Tamagotchi (another hit product created by a woman) in United States, the Atlus Co. is hoping to emulate its pop appeal. The machine was introduced at a trade show in New York early this summer. Based on the press attention by Japanese television media and US newspapers, Atlus began plans to bring Print Club to the United States.

Atlus will begin its big push into the US market later this fall, with a goal of 10,000 machines in the United States by the end of the year. Atlus now has 4,000 machines in other Asian countries and is sending 2,000 machines to Europe.

The differences between markets in Japan and the United States has Atlus somewhat edgy about its potential success abroad. Video arcades aren't as popular in the United States, so the company instead is targeting toy-store chains, such as Toys "R" Us, as well as movie theaters and fast-food restaurants. The $3 price per play in the United States may prove daunting as well.

"In the US, you don't get the foot traffic you do in Japan," Takenaka said. "That's why it's not a surefire thing."

But in Japan, students can't imagine school life without Print Club. "It's the most popular thing now," Kawaguchi said.

***Kevin Voigt** is a freelance writer based in central Kyushu.*

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Soba: Hardy and healthy

by Robbie Swinnerton

Many lands have incorporated buckwheat into their diets. In Eastern Europe there is kasha; Brittany is known for its dark *crêpes de sarrasin*; and people in the remote Himalayan foothills survive on various forms of buckwheat dumplings. But it is only in Japan that such an abiding passion has manifested around what is often considered a gritty hardship food.

It was through necessity rather than choice that buckwheat became a staple food in Japan's inhospitable mountain regions. No other grain takes hold as well in the infertile soil and harsh climate of the uplands. Moreover its short growing period means that in some areas two crops can be harvested per year, providing a greater volume of nourishment than the slower-growing cereals, rice or barley.

In earliest times, buckwheat grain was milled on crude grinding stones and the resulting flour was fashioned into simple dumplings. It was not until around 300 years ago that the idea caught on of pressing the buckwheat dough and cutting it into noodles. Known as *soba-kiri* ("cut buckwheat"), this inspired discovery transformed the eating habits not just of Japanese peasants but also their urban cousins.

Soba became one of the foods sold by itinerant hawkers who plied the city streets and back alleys, carrying their stalls on their backs. Unlike the prepackaged dried noodles commonly available today, the soba they peddled was freshly rolled and cut, a process known in Japanese as *te-uchi* (literally "hand-beaten"). This name was given because buckwheat flour does not readily form into a cohesive dough without substantial kneading and pounding, and even so requires the addition of a small percentage of wheat flour to prevent the noodles from falling apart.

In the Edo era, the standard composition of soba was usually eight parts buckwheat to two parts wheat flour. Modern producers often reverse these proportions in the interest of economy and ease of processing. This is the kind of product

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